AMENDMENTS

The following listing supplements all previous versions.

1. (Currently amended) A biodegradable nonwoven web having a permeability within the range of about 500 to about 1500 μm^2 and a void volume that is greater than about 25 cm^3/gram, wherein the web comprises

   a. a first biodegradable binder fiber that does not undergo severe heat shrinkage and

   b. a second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber having a melting temperature at least about 20°C higher than the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber, wherein the biodegradable nonwoven web is carded and then thermally bonded at a temperature less than about 23°C above the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber, ~~using only convective heating~~ so as to thoroughly bind, but not ~~overbind~~ melt, the second fiber ~~web and~~ to achieve the permeability and void volume.

2. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber is a multicomponent fiber comprising a surface component and a non-surface component.

3. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the surface component has a melting temperature at least about 10°C less than the melting temperature of the non-surface component.

4. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 3, wherein the second thermoplastic fiber has a melting temperature at least about 20°C. higher than the melting temperature of the surface component of the multicomponent fiber.

5. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 3, wherein the surface component comprises L,D-polylactide (LD-PLA), or a polylactide-caprolactone copolymer.

6. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 3, wherein the surface component comprises L,D-polylactide (LD-PLA), the non-surface component comprises polylactide, and the surface component has a lower L:D ratio than the non-surface component.

7. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the multicomponent fiber is a bicomponent sheath/core fiber.

8. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 7, wherein the sheath is 95:5 L:D polylactide, or a polylactide-caprolactone copolymer, and the core is 100% L-polylactide.

9. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first fiber exhibits an amount of shrinkage, at a temperature of about 70° C., that is less than about 10 percent.

10. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the second fiber is selected from the group consisting of lower alkyl cellulose esters, starch, polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), chitosan, and PHBV (copolymer of polybetahydroxy butyrate and betahydroxyvalerate).

11. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 10, wherein the lower alkyl cellulose ester is cellulose acetate.

12. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 1, further having a contact angle less than 80 degrees, and wherein the contact angle is due to intrinsic properties of the fibers.

13. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 1, comprising from about 40% to 95% of the first fiber, and from about 60% to 5% of the second fiber.

14. (Original) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the web is produced by a bonded carded web process using through-air bonding.

15. (Original) An absorbent article comprising a surge layer made from the nonwoven web of claim 1.

16. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of claim 15, comprising a liquid-permeable topsheet, a backsheet attached to the liquid-permeable topsheet, an absorbent structure positioned between the liquid-permeable topsheet and the backsheet, and wherein the surge layer is positioned between the topsheet and the absorbent structure.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently amended) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber and the second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber, each have a fiber length of at least about ~~25~~ 35 millimeters.

25. (Currently amended) The nonwoven web of claim 1, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber and the second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber, each have a fiber length of about 25 to ~~50~~ about 75 millimeters.

26. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 2, wherein the nonwoven web is thermally bonded using a bonded carded web process.

27. (Currently amended) A biodegradable nonwoven web having a permeability within the range of about 500 to about 1500 μm^2 and a void volume that is greater than about 25 cm^3/gram, wherein the web comprises a first biodegradable binder fiber that does not undergo severe heat shrinkage and a second biodegradable thermoplastic fiber having a melting temperature at least about 20°C higher than the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber; and

wherein the biodegradable nonwoven web is carded and then thermally bonded at a temperature within about ~~5~~2°C below the melting temperature of the first biodegradable binder fiber~~, using only convective heating~~ so as to thoroughly bind, but not ~~overbind~~ melt, the ~~web and~~ second fiber to achieve the permeability and the void volume.

28. (Previously presented) The nonwoven web of claim 27, wherein the first biodegradable binder fiber is a multicomponent fiber comprising a surface component and a non-surface component.

29. (Cancelled)